



Regional Action Plan / Decision-Making Program (RAP-DM)

Quarterly Report (January – March 2005)

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By:

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and

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Introduction

This quarter saw the launching of many activities that are critical to the RAP-DMP's success. These activities fall into two main areas: technical and administrative.

Following are the main accomplishments in the two areas:

Technical :

- Technical review of Regional Action Plans (*PARE : Plans d'Actions Régionaux de l'Education (PARE)*)
- Budget arbitration and harmonization of the PARE
- Donor funding analysis
- Technical launching of the RAP-DMP in the regions : Mission to the Education Academies (AE : Académies d'Enseignements)
- Regional Education Development Fund procedures

Logistical and administrative

- Staff hiring
- RAP-DMP move into MEN office space
- CTN and CTR designation

Technical Accomplishments

Technical review of regional action plans and budget planning

This technical review aims to provide initial feedback from the central level on the draft action plans; it is intended to make it possible for the regions to improve their plans prior to arbitration at the national level. This review would normally take place some months prior to the end of the year preceding the implementation period, perhaps in October. Late submission of the action plans and the heavy work load at the central level were the primary reason for holding the technical review in February. In the review the RAP-DMP team collaborated with the CADDE and the CPS in analyzing each PARE. Following are the main themes of the feedback:

- Difficulty in estimating costs,
- Unclear determination of responsibility for activities,
- The sources of funding and the level of funding of the different technical and financial partners « *Partenaires Techniques et Financiers (PTF)* » were not presented clearly,
- Lack of activity implementation timetable,
- Lack of linkage between proposed activities and expected results.

The team analyzed some of these aspects of the PAREs submitted to CADDE. This analysis is documented in Annex 1 (attached), and can be used to set baselines for qualitative review of the PAREs.

Budget arbitration and harmonization of the PARE

The RAP-DMP technical team was also requested to participate in the budget planning sessions of the PAREs. The goal of the activity is to ensure an appropriate allocation of resources between regions and the central ministry for action plan implementation. Some of the key observations were:

- The figures for donor resources in the MEN's Budget Programming 2005 were considered as available for action plan activity funding. This is not always the case since these amounts include the cost of supporting implementing agency operations

including technical assistance in addition to those costs specifically linked to PARE activities. This problem can result in unrealistic budgeting for PARE costs as the regional teams had worked with the total amount instead of the actual amount available for PARE implementation.

- Funds indicated by PTF and “positioned” by DAF may actually be intended for specific activities that are not in the action plan. For example, one PTF has indicated an amount of more than 2 billion CFA francs for the « *Formation Initiale et Continue des Enseignants. . .* » initial and on-going teacher training component. Much of this amount actually corresponds to salary supplements for contract teachers, and salary supplements (a recurrent cost) are not part of the action plan’s strategic framework.
- At the end of the workshop, neither the regional nor the central services had finished this budgeting exercise. A taskforce had to continue the work to finalize the plans.

The RAP-DMP team believes that the 2006 planning process will improve significantly. To this end, as part of their bottom up planning, CADDE has already started the 2006 planning process.

Analysis of Donor Funding by Type of Funding

In addition to the above-mentioned technical assistance, the RAP-DMP technical team began, at the end of the quarter, to provide support in analyzing the types of funding provided by donors. This work, implemented collaboratively with DAF staff under the supervision of Mr. Bonaventure MAIGA, MEN Technical Advisor, will help clarify the types of funding from PTF. Thus RAP-DMP will contribute in finalizing more realistic and operational PAREs. One of the advantages of this initiative is that there will no longer be duplicate resource allocation in action plans. This analysis will be finished in April.

Launching workshop of the education development plans in Bamako

RAP-DMP participated in the launching workshop of the education development plans in Bamako. This workshop gathered representatives from local communities (mayors of Bamako district communes) and regional MEN education offices (CAP and AE). The PDE development guide written by CADDE was presented, making it possible for the communities to familiarize themselves with the development of plans.

Among the issues raised by participants were the problem of land plots reserved for education (school, CAP construction) being occupied by others, how to handle the recruitment of contractual teachers in terms of responsibility and the transfer of funds, and how to obtain more information on quotas, and the timetable and also be involved in the recruitment process.

The RAP-DMP notes the following as they relate to devolution of authority and decentralization:

- Since the transfer of resources to the communities is not foreseen until 2007, those in charge of education development plans may experience some frustrations. It will not be easy for CADDE to produce tangible results in decentralization without actual decentralized financial resources (under the responsibility of the ministry of economy and finance).
- Understanding the guide: the stated purpose of the guide presentation is to familiarize the reader to the concept and not to enable the communities to develop PDEs. A more practical guide with a model PDE needs to be developed prior to this implementation. At any rate the use of such a tool is crucial in developing PDEs.

Technical Launching of the RAP-DMP in the AEs

From March 06 to 11, 2005, the RAP-DMP team visited the AEs in Kayes, Koulikoro, Kita and Kati. The mission report is attached as *Annex 2*. The mission aimed at (i) presenting RAP-DMP and

clarifying the roles and responsibilities of regional technical representatives (CTR); (ii) in collaboration with the representatives of DAF, gaining insight on the financial management system used in each AE, thus identifying ways to improve the financial channels at the de-concentrated level to make it easy for them to access funds from different sources; and (iii) obtaining information on the need for human resources, communication and planning.

This mission was made possible thanks to the participation of different national representatives and the good collaboration with key staff at the central level. Representatives from CADDE, CPS and DAF participated in the mission. In each AE, work sessions were conducted on themes like personnel management, financial management and communication. During each mission the team liaised with Academy Directors (DAE), heads of department, staff in the management, planning and communication units; and also advisors in charge of girls' education and guidance.

In terms of results, one can notice that some practices in financial management need improvement. The need for training must be taken into account to achieve overall system improvement. Considering the shortage of personnel, there is a need to redefine responsibilities. At the level of communication, there is a deficit; an emphasis should be put on the efficient use of modern means of communication.

Through this mission, the team was able to establish baselines in areas such as job descriptions, financial management and communication systems. This mission also paved the way to more collaboration and integration of RAP-DMP with the Ministry of Education.

Work sessions on the regional funds for education development

As an additional measure to the set up of RAP-DMP, USAID has set up a Regional Education Development Fund (REDF) for regional MEN structures. During the reporting period the various meetings with USAID were basically about the identification of the constraints and specific concerns for USAID and also to develop strategies to facilitate the disbursement of this fund.

The process of development of the 2005 PARE will be completed soon; the PAREs will then be submitted to the central level. It will be only then that the quality of the plans could be assessed in view to start the disbursement. A key question at this time is whether for this first year funds should be disbursed on the basis of regional population or on some other criteria. Another topic of discussion has been the financial management capacity of the AEs. To facilitate the process, the RAP-DMP team developed a draft process for disbursement management. The USAID financial analyst will examine the proposal and make recommendations with a view to its approval. USAID is also responsible for determining whether existing MEN financial management systems are adequate.

Logistics and Administration

Staff hiring

In January, the RAP-DMP hired a technical coordinator for training, a finance manager and an administrative assistant. A receptionist was hired in February. At the end of the period, the following planned staff had not yet been hired: two drivers, the monitoring and evaluation specialist, and the messenger. The drivers will not be hired until vehicles are procured.

Office space

CADDE offered the program the use of one office on its premises and DAF provided two offices making for a total of 3 offices (out of the four offices planned for in the technical proposal).

RAP-DMP installed a high speed internet connection at the CADDE and wired three offices there for internet use. The office at CADDE is mainly used by the technical team: the program manager and the technical coordinator.

RAP-DMP has 2 offices at the central ministry, Place de la Liberté, one of which is used by the administrative team and the program manager; the second office is reserved for the monitoring and evaluation specialist and consultants.

As budgeted, RAP-DMP has acquired most of its equipment except vehicles. The team hopes to obtain authorization to purchase Japanese-built vehicles. This will save RAP-DMP the rental of such vehicles for missions in the North and will greatly reduce fuel and repair costs.

CTR/CTN Designation

Soon after RAP-DMP start-up it became clear that instead of having one CTN (Central-level technical liaison), it would be better to have a CTN for each of the key structures with which the RAP-DMP collaborates regularly. Therefore, instead of asking the central ministry for formal designation of one CTN, the RAP-DMP requested that each structure designate informally one person who could serve as CTN until more permanent, formal arrangements could be made.

For the CTR (Regional technical liaison), the MEN sent a letter to the AEs requesting that they designate the CTR according to criteria proposed by the RAP-DMP. Several AEs had already responded by the end of the reporting period. It is anticipated that the remaining AEs will respond after the second and third RAP-DMP launching field trips (to the northeast and south of the country).

Synergy with other structures

In the context of partnership, the RAP-DMP collaborates with all of the MEN's technical partner structures, specifically in the area of regional planning. The team has participated in various meetings: Access and Management Thematic Group meeting, work sessions on the development of PDE guide, the review sessions of the PAREs, and the PARE review and harmonization week.

RAP-DMP has worked with CADDE to design a partners' directory for those working on decentralization. This directory will make it possible for partners to know each other and collaborate in avoiding duplication of actions. The directory should be ready by the end of the coming quarter. RAP-DMP and World Education have arranged to have regular meetings to share and harmonize their interventions with the AEs. A similar exchange system will be established with *Programme de Gouvernance Partagé* (shared governance program), a key player in decentralization that has direct impact on the education system.

Difficulties and Opportunities

In so far as RAP-DMP works directly with MEN, it is important to take into account the availability of their technical staff. The key issue is the workload relating to meetings around PISE 1 (Education Sector Investment Program) and the planning for PISE 2. Another issue is the difficulty in communication within the MEN, since email is rarely used as a means of internal communication. This requires persistent personal contact which slows the communication process. From the RAP-DMP team's perspective, it makes our job challenging if the MEN technical staff is not available due to a lack of communication. Although the installation of the internet connection at CADDE is a first step toward improving communication within MEN, the RAP-DMP team will have to concentrate on a variety of communication means.

Another set of encountered difficulties arises when the MEN's work schedule is buffeted by external pressures. A donor agency or technical partner can, for example, unilaterally change its work plan. This has repercussions on the RAP-DMP work plan.

In this context the RAP-DMP moves forward, gaining the most traction by responding to specific requests coming from the technical directorates with which it works. There will be a number of preparation activities for the PISE2 in the coming period. These activities will require the participation of a large number of MEN technical staff from key structures. This mobilization is at the same time an opportunity for RAP-DMP to contribute in the improvement of the planning process.